

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph at page 1, line 24 – page 2, line 7 with the following rewritten paragraph:

If the occlusion reducing type NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst (which might hereinafter be simply called a catalyst or a NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst) is disposed in an exhaust passageway of the internal combustion engine capable of performing the lean combustion, the catalyst absorbs NO<sub>x</sub> contained in the exhaust gas when the exhaust gas having a lean air-fuel ratio flows, and releases NO<sub>x</sub>, as NO<sub>2</sub>, absorbed by the catalyst when the exhaust gas having a stoichiometric ratio (theoretical air-fuel ratio) or a rich air-fuel ratio flows. Further, this is reduced into N<sub>2</sub> by a reducing component such as HC and CO contained in the exhaust gas, thereby purging the NO<sub>x</sub> by disassociation.